

SENATE BILL 2979

By Gilbert

AN ACT relative to honoring Tennessee's Medal of Honor recipients.

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of this general assembly to ensure that the courageous veterans of this state are properly honored; and

WHEREAS, from the inception of this great nation, Tennesseans have distinguished themselves in times of war, earning Tennessee its designation as the "Volunteer State"; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has produced literally thousands of brave men and women who have sacrificed personal concerns and safety to protect and preserve the freedoms we enjoy today and hopefully future generations will continue to cherish for many years to come; and

WHEREAS, of these courageous veterans, thirty-nine Tennesseans have received the highest military recognition that this country confers, the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has more Medal of Honor recipients per population than any other state; and

WHEREAS, Tennesseans have received Medals of Honor in every major war in which American forces have been involved since the medal was created in 1862; and

WHEREAS, thirty-two Medal of Honor recipients are buried in Tennessee, including some who are not native Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, part of the heroic group who received the first Medals of Honor issued are buried in Chattanooga National Cemetery: five Union soldiers from Ohio who were part of the Andrews' Raiders party that hijacked the Confederate locomotive, "The General"; and

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WHEREAS, Tennessee has also produced two minorities who have received the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, two Tennessee recipients of the Medal of Honor who were U.S. Navy corpsman had Navy ships named in their honor; and

WHEREAS, in July, 1990, the National Medal of Honor Museum of Military History opened in Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, the only museum of its kind in the United States, the National Medal of Honor Museum is administered and operated on a completely non-profit basis by volunteers in continuation of the proud Tennessee tradition of volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, today, the 10,000 square foot facility is filled to the brim with military memorabilia, and efforts are underway to procure land and funds to build a world-class military museum; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the National Medal of Honor Museum is truly important, because the citizens of this nation and this state need to witness firsthand what the members of the U.S. Armed Forces have sacrificed to preserve the liberty and freedom we are now fortunate to enjoy; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly recognizes and declares that the collective contributions of Tennessee's Medal of Honor recipients to this state and the United States of America represent a poignant and everlasting tribute to patriotism, courage and valor; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly believes that every child in Tennessee would be enriched by an understanding and appreciation of the collective contributions of Tennessee's Medal of Honor recipients; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly should take all prudent and necessary actions to properly honor Tennessee's Medal of Honor recipients and to preserve the memories of their selfless and heroic actions for democracy and the American way of life; now, therefore,
BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. The Department of Environment and Conservation is hereby urged and encouraged to provide a lasting tribute to Tennessee's thirty-nine Medal of Honor recipients by erecting a memorial plaque for each of them at appropriate locations on the Bicentennial Mall in Nashville.

SECTION 2. The Tennessee Film, Entertainment and Music Commission is urged and encouraged to likewise provide a lasting tribute to Tennessee's thirty-nine Medal of Honor recipients by producing, in cooperation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Department of Education and the Tennessee Historical Commission, a film or videotape that depicts the heroic actions and great patriotism evidenced by our courageous Medal of Honor recipients for screening in Tennessee's elementary and secondary schools, which videotape shall also be suitable as an educational tool for the instruction of Tennessee's school children on the value of patriotism, courage and valor. In furtherance of this request, the Commission shall convene a meeting prior to January 1, 1999, of the appropriate representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Education and the Tennessee Historical Commission to assess the feasibility of such project and report to the standing committees of the legislature approving this act.

SECTION 3. The Commission is also urged and encouraged to consider the utilization of corporate sponsorships for the videotape project and to direct any excess funds to the Department of Environment and Conservation for the memorial plaques described in Section 1.

SECTION 4. This General Assembly hereby urges all Tennessee businesses and citizens to provide moral and financial support to the proposed improvements, including the construction of a new physical facility, for the National Medal of Honor Museum of Military History in Chattanooga, and the proposed videotape project.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.